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## **Sharing the Learning**

*“Evaluation will be approached as a continuous learning opportunity to improve services and outcomes. This will be done in a partnership between the CFC and its Partner Network in order to discover the best approaches to achieving and sustaining comprehensive child, family and community outcomes, rather than as a means to control or coerce services delivery partners” - CFC Plan August 2000*

### **What is Sharing the Learning?**

From the very beginning, the work of the Children and Families Commission in Placer County has been outcome focused. Starting with an inclusive community planning strategy that culminated in our “Request for Results” process, and continuing with the provision of technical assistance to help our partners articulate outcomes and define performance measures (both qualitative and quantitative). We are now in the process of following-up with each partner to analyze and learn from the performance data that is collected.

We have an appreciation for the central role of relationships in the CFC Partner Network that has been formed to provide services to the 0-5 population. Information flow is critical to the healthy development of these relationships and we are fostering that information flow by “sharing the learning” from our data conversations. To do this we set-up meetings with each partner where we try to create safe, non-judgmental spaces for conversation and communication related to data that has been collected to show achievement of outcomes. At the end of each data conversation we capture any highlights and learning that emerged from the conversations and we send that information to the entire network. The theory is that our CFC Partner Network is an adaptive interconnected system like the neurons in the young brain. By providing a simple feedback loop to exchange outcome data (i.e., information) from one part of the system to the rest of the system we hope to strengthen the system and foster system-wide knowledge about what is happening with our 0-5 population countywide. It is our hope that this information flow and relationship building will create sustainable linkages throughout the CFC Partner Network that will help it adapt and provide meaningful, results-oriented services to the 0-5 population for years to come.

The following are short summaries of the various “learning conversations” that we’ve held so far. This part of our web page will be continually updated as we have data conversations with the CFC Partner Network for the remainder of 2003.

## **Auburn Family Tae Kwon Do**

Dan Lovas of the Auburn Family Tae Kwon Do used CFC funds to provide scholarships for the "Little Ninja" program that helps young children develop appropriate motor skills, self-esteem, listening skills, and self-discipline. Also, there was an expectation that parents of children in the program would learn new and fun ways to enhance their parenting skills.

We met on December 18, 2002 to review data collected in the program. Fiona Tuttle facilitated the conversation.

The eight interconnected elements of the program are:

Focus - Looking and listening

Teamwork - Interacting with others to accomplish something

Control - Soft touch - hard touch. Being loud - being quiet, etc.

Balance - Physical balancing abilities

Memory - Remembering sequences of moves and what they are called

Discipline - Staying focused while in the program and outside of the program.

Fitness - Focuses on motor skills with a positive view on exercise

Coordination - Mental/physical timing. Distinguishing between left and right, etc.

## **What we learned:**

This is a very impressive program that provides incredible and accomplishable goals for 3-5 year olds. The instructors love the kids and it shows. The program goals have universal application and are easily transferable beyond the Little Ninja Program. For example, there were many stories of how parents used key Little Ninja words or concepts to positively discipline their children such as behaving in the supermarket line or to provide motivation for household tasks like picking up and putting away toys, etc. The skills, mindsets and values that are part of the Little Ninja Program benefit kids at any age but the experience for 3-5 year olds is profound. The eight levels could even be a model for an organization.

Children who have good parent support and know their parents are interested in what they are doing do better in the course - as opposed to parents who sit in the bleachers and read the newspaper, work on a laptop, talk on the cell phone and otherwise do not pay attention to what the child is experiencing.

The survey data on the development of parenting skills is not very accurate and will be revised. But the bench marking process of awarding "stripes" for achievement of the eight levels provides good data on the child's progress. It is

obvious that the children in this program are achieving important developmental goals. The data from the children's progress is used to improve their participation in the program.

We need to develop a rating sheet for the children that is completed by the parent so that we can capture parent observations and provide a way for self-reporting. Also, we need to develop ways for parents to volunteer for tasks during the classes to help them become more involved in their child's experience.

It would be beneficial to increase the number of children who continue with the program, but some families have financial barriers. The program will apply for additional CFC funds to offer more stipends.

Other people who will be invited to the next data conversation are the instructors and parent representation. A video is being developed and will be part of the conversation.

## **Home First - DeAnne Thornton**

The data conversation provided insight and affirmation about our program participants. Overall, families enter the program with a combination of strengths and needs and begin to show improvements within six months of program entry. We've learned that families do not always disclose all family information at program entry, confirming the importance we place on the relationship/trust building process with the family. It is critical that the data is consistent as it is extremely valuable in understanding family and program needs. The following program enhancements were made following our Learning Conversation(s):

- Screen 1 is completed within 30 days of program entry. This allows the Home Visitor to have 3-4 meetings with the family before completing the first screen.
- Home Visitors complete screens with Supervisor to ensure consistency;
- Screening procedures include indicator definitions. We learned that the interpretation of certain indicators was inconsistent among staff (e.g. learning environment, enrichment activities, self-sufficiency.)
- "Assessments Due Report" is now generated each month to ensure timely completion of screens.

- Outcome Reports are now generated monthly to monitor progress toward desired outcomes.
- We will continue to explore procedures to encourage completion of screens with other service providers as appropriate to each case.

### **Superior Court Family Law Facilitator - Diane Brass**

The young child's brain develops best in nurturing environments. The presence of stress can actually inhibit brain development.

The Family Law Facilitator provides legal document assistance to parents of children under five years of age. While legal document preparation is underway, support services and referrals are made. This service is provided during the immediate aftermath of a breakup with the goal of reducing tension and disruption to the children involved.

With the assistance of David Gray (evaluation consultant to the CFC) this program designed a "child information form" to capture data to measure achievement of the anticipated outcomes.

After viewing the data analysis from our program and from the STEP program, I have a better understanding of the weak areas in our data instrument and its use. We have taken the information we gathered and have adjusted our data collection questionnaire to be more detailed, especially regarding referrals. In addition we have held an in service training for our staff and volunteers to encourage them to be diligent in completing the staff section of the data forms. To further improve our efforts, David Gray has kindly consented to visit our program so as to provide additional feedback for assisting with data collection.

We do not plan any significant changes in the nature of the services we provide, but have recently become aware of some other Prop 10 partners, particularly Golden Sierra's Men, Infants, and Children program, which I believe will be very helpful to some of our customers.

## **Sierra Vista Community Center (Colfax) – Seedlings Program**

The “Seedlings” (*and their roots*) enrichment group is a venue that encourages parent involvement and play with their young children. The outcomes for the program are:

Parents and caregivers are actively involved with the healthy development of children.

There is an Increased understanding amongst parents and caretakers regarding appropriate child development and the resources available to assist with healthy development

The program attempts to cultivate healthy relationships within the family circle, among peers and with the community. This is done by providing social skill development; parent education; volunteer opportunities; and a program of professionally planned and creative experiences for children that involves: Music and singing, recognizing shapes, colors, and days of the week; practicing sharing and responsibility; provision of family support and nutrition. A Prenatal Calendar is planned that provides places for the parent to learn about different developmental stages and to record important information on the child including pictures.

We spoke with Lisa Preston, who teaches in the program and Lou and Roy Ross who provide a link with the Sierra Vista Community Center (the fiscal sponsor) and provide consultation on early childhood development activities.

We looked at photographs and read letters from parents who had participated in the program and had a conversation with Lisa, Lou and Roy about what has been learned so far.

The need has changed from what was originally envisioned. Since there is a State Pre-School operating next door and many of the Seedlings participants are in the 1 to 2 age group the teachers feel that it may be more beneficial to structure activities that meet the needs of this age. This has prompted the staff to adapt more children’s activities to 1-2 age group instead of the 3-5 age group.

They are thinking about purchasing and installing play equipment and some tumbling mats.

Christine Bonner of the Music Collaborative played there, and they would like more music activities for the children.

Collaboration with the state Head Start pre-school has enabled more children to participate in pre-school activities.

There is not very much participation from the prenatal population. The program is not oriented to this group and that is why the "First Year Calendar" is important. It can serve as an information and publicity tool for those who are expecting. There is a need to get some parent feedback on this.

There is a need for more consistency in family involvement but finding children from the Colfax area to participate in the program is tough.

Outreach efforts are being made to the Colfax community and to the Blue Canyon and Alta areas. But "word of mouth" between acquaintances is still the best way to advertise in this region.

The Community Services Council (Sierra Vista Center) needs to be more aware of the program and support it more fully. There is a need for stronger leadership from the Council. Lou and Roy Ross are going to bring this up a future council meeting.

The current teacher would like to have more parent volunteers to take some responsibility for the calendar of activities so that she is not the only one organizing this. The Seedlings Program can't become totally dependent upon her if it is to be sustained.

### **WPUSD Preschool Program - Getta Dolinsek**

Although the data for the 2002 six-week kindergarten readiness program needs to be redone because of detail errors before it can be analyzed, the conversation was helpful in clarifying program and evaluation glitches. As for evaluation issues, the conversation brought up improvements in the areas of intern training and better understanding of the SMART Outcomes tool, making sure the correct form is used for the appropriate age, checking the form to make sure it is readable and completed correctly by the interns and other users. Through the conversation, certain issues were brought up for clarification in the administration of the program. From the group discussion, it was felt that children who are on the waiting list for Head Start or the State Preschool programs should be allowed to apply for the Kindergarten Readiness Center to fill the program.

The "next steps" are already in the workings. There is a training scheduled for the interns and possibly child care providers in the community who might be interested

in the SMART Outcomes tool. The SMART Outcome forms have been revised to add the birth date and "pre" and "post" periods to make the form more efficient. The summer school teacher will be hired to redo the SMART Outcomes on each child who attended the summer school class by using the age appropriate form. A better effort will be made in making sure the information on the forms is readable for the individuals inputting the data. Also, the individual who receives the forms to file has been asked to check the forms for completeness.

Once the teacher has redone the SMART Outcomes and when the evaluator has analyzed both assessment pieces, a meeting should be set to discuss the results. The future conversation should have individuals from the Early Childhood Representative Consortium, the interns (if possible), the recently hired teacher for the present program, and others interested in the outcome of the summer school program.

### **Superior Court - Suzanne Feris**

We found the data conversation very helpful. It was interesting to have the data be as complex as the parents and children in the STEP Program. The data is a good snapshot of what is actually happening to these families and how conflict directly affects the developmental progress of these children, as well as the ability of the parents to provide for the well-being of their children.

It was also rewarding to see that all the hard work we do collecting the data shows us how to better serve our parents and their children. It also validates the fact that this is not an easy program due to the dynamics of family law.

The changes we are making this year to the program are to add mediators in the court room during the STEP Calendar; parental coaches are assigned to parents continuing to struggle with parenting issues; we have added more court dates and stagger the times the parties appear so the time they are in court is focused and directed on the best interest of their children. Of course this program continues to be a work in progress and we will continue to offer, or refer, the families to needed services. We enjoyed the presentation and think the Commission is doing an amazing job.



## **MDIC - Fiona Tuttle**

The conversation about learning from our data reinforced that I need to:

1. Have a workgroup with Victim/Witness around the outcome screens to better tie together their piece with the whole picture. Some feedback I received from Patsie Fletcher is that the advocates don't think it is fair to rate parents/caretakers after only 2 hours of meeting them and drawing conclusions around that. I will address that.
2. Spend 3 minutes with the team after our case closure to fill out sections of the screen and then facilitate and generate some brainstorming about partners we could refer the children and families to.
3. Educate the team about what is available to our families through the CFC network.
4. Look at some way of MDIC following/tracking the 0-5's that go through MDIC.
5. Expand our Team at the next data presentation to participants missing such as the dependency commissioner, a family representative.
6. Not to fill out the learning/education on the child outcomes screen unless we get a broader perspective.

## **Sharing the Learning: Music Collaborative**

Much has been said about the opportunity that Prop. 10 provides to fund strength-based approaches and the “Music Collaborative” is a good example. The CFC Partners who run the program are: Paula Peach Site Trainer/Facilitator, Leesa Albrecht, ChildGarten Teacher/Facilitator, Christine Bonner, Concert Coordinator.

It has long been known that certain types of music activate the temporal lobes and help children learn, process, and remember information more efficiently. It is also likely that certain types of music open new pathways into the mind.

The overall desired outcome of the Music Collaborative is that all children and their families have access to high quality music enrichment which will improve child development. Recognizing that music provides an important underpinning to brain development this program goes about bringing music into children’s lives in three ways: 1) Providing music training for child care providers, pre-school and kindergarten teachers to help them integrate music into their programs; 2) Providing community concerts throughout the county in different venues including pre-school and kindergarten sites so that children can be exposed to live quality music; and 3) Providing scholarships so that more children can participate in music lessons.

We met with the Paula, Leesa and Christine to look at the data they have collected through pre-post surveys and stories from their observations. We captured the learning from our conversation to share with the rest of the network. The following notes cover the three interrelated approaches of the Music Collaborative: Community Concerts; Teaching Teachers; and Scholarships (MusikGarten).

We will hold another data conversation with the Music Collaborative in July. If you are interested in participating contact us at 889.6772 Or send an e-mail to Nancy at [nbaggett@placer.ca.gov](mailto:nbaggett@placer.ca.gov) . If you would like more information about how to participate in the Music Collaborative contact Leesa Albrecht 530.745.0284 [Sosdayandnight@yahoo.com](mailto:Sosdayandnight@yahoo.com) or Christine Bonner 530.346.8369 [Christine@foothill.net](mailto:Christine@foothill.net) or Paula Peach 530.885.8878 [peachpaula@hotmail.com](mailto:peachpaula@hotmail.com)

### **Community Concerts**

- Children’s responses are directly linked to the environment in which the concert is performed. Areas with adequate space and a “developmental atmosphere” bring out the most in the children.
- More advance information needs to be provided to the host site prior to the concerts about music and its beneficial connection to brain development. Also, we need to inform providers about what to expect with the concert so that it will be easier for kids to fully experience the music. For example, in some sites the children were instructed not to move during the performances. This defeats the

purpose of children enjoying music, and helping them to coordinate body movement to the rhythm, etc.

- Parents' perception about the degree to which their child is exposed to quality music is inflated – that is, parents report that their kids get more exposure than the collaborative staff believes is actually happening.
- Parents seem to be afraid to admit that maybe music is not a big part of their child's experience.
- There is not common knowledge among parents or child care givers about the important role quality music plays in brain development. There is an extreme need to educate and train child care providers in how to use music and quality instruments with children.
- We need to clarify the distinction (and misinformation) between quality music and over-stimulating commercial music.
- The existing survey instrument to measure the results of this approach needs to be revised to capture expectations and observations.
- Children's overall response to live musical performance was very favorable. In some instances immediate response was observed in children with disabilities.

### **Teaching Teachers**

- Two-thirds to three-quarters of the teachers do not have any music training.
- To have a sustainable program, the training needs to be provided at least two times a week for 15 weeks.
- Pre-schools tended to be more committed to the program than Day Care Centers. Pre-school teachers seemed to implement more programs that were oriented toward child development, which helped them understand and see the correlation to music development.
- An environment that is developmentally focused is a better environment to teach music.
- There is a need to prepare teachers so that they are aware of the expectations.
- Teachers are seeing changes directly related to the provision of the music program such as increased listening and following directions; increased participation in activities (especially children with special needs); improvement in expressing themselves without using words; increased singing by children after about 3 weeks; and 3-5 year olds seemed to gain confidence in leading activities.

- Two-to-three-year-olds did very well in the program; so incorporating multiple ages is a good thing. Young children model after older children.
- Children, especially the boys, really enjoy discovering their “singing voice.”
- At one Head Start site a teacher commented about seeing a real time correlation between what children were doing in the music program and actions that were signs of age appropriate development. A puzzling point was that the Head Start teacher was not allowed to share “High Scope” information with the music teacher.

### **Scholarships (MusikGarten)**

- Similar to the finding in providing concerts, we need to set expectations in advance about the parent’s role so that they can learn more while in class. Parents generally do not understand the importance of the role music plays in brain development.
- Combination age groups (2-3 and 3-5 year olds) work best as they include siblings and are more of a family approach.
- Direct conversations with participants are a better ways to get information than surveys.
- Initial contact can be with a larger group but small groups are better for music development.
- Children with even a little music experience have a better foundation to build on than children with no previous experience. Early experience sticks.
- Parents were not reached through childcare programs.
- The children’s excitement and enjoyment of music has impacted the families and helped them get involved. They often lead music time together with their parents at home.
- Parents and their children are interacting with the music materials sent home 30 minutes or more weekly.
- Parents have shared the impact of music in their child’s language development.
- Autistic children who rarely participate with their pre-school class did participate in the music class.

## **BREASTFEEDING COALITION**

### **What the data shows:**

- 125+ Moms have been seen through the clinic services
- 52 Surveys have been completed (time constraints and staff has kept this from being 100% completion)
- Findings from the surveys include:
  - Most mothers will complete a survey when given one.
  - Most mothers visiting the clinic are 30-35 years of age.
  - Most mothers visiting the clinic are first time moms.
  - Most mothers visiting the clinic are part of a household with an income of \$75,000 or more per year.
  - There are a few different difficulties that mothers encounter with breastfeeding that cause them to access the clinic services.
  - The biggest reason mothers choose to supplement is low milk supply.
  - Most mothers visiting the clinic live in South Placer County.
  - Most mothers visiting the clinic are seen twice. First to identify the problem and the second time to follow up.

### **What have they learned:**

- Support makes a huge difference (support includes: emotional, physically showing them, phone call assistance as needed, encouragement to build confidence, ideas if the baby isn't getting enough, average 2 hour clinic visit).
- Surprised that there isn't a higher need for breast pumps.
- More phone calls for assistance than expected.
- Childcare facilities don't prefer breastfed babies (some won't even take them).

### **Changes-Next Steps**

1. As a result of the data collected from the survey- a question, asking if the mother's would be willing to pay for the service on a sliding scale (services will not be denied to anyone).
2. One half hour per day will be set aside for follow up phone calls to mother's served through the clinic. A small set of questions will be asked that touch on the following:
  - Child's age and as to whether or not they are still being breastfed (if not reason for quitting).
  - Start asking moms if they would refer the services to a friend or family member.
  - Ask moms if their needs are being met or are they in need of additional services.
3. Contact to Childcare providers, childcare resource and referral, and Sierra College to educate current and future childcare providers about the

benefits of breastfeeding and the need to provide childcare to nursing moms.

4. The Community Health Epidemiologist will compile stats for the Breastfeeding Coalition as part of the partnership with the County.
5. Changes will be made to the training/conference (based on evaluation feedback).
  - More in depth information will be provided
  - Healthier refreshments will be provided
  - The agenda and format will continue to be flexible.
6. Try to increase service utilization by all income levels through the following:
  - Early identification and contact with pregnant moms by partnering with other agencies, such as, CAPC, Kings Beach FRC, Sutter Auburn Faith Ob & Baby Track, the Lincoln Lighthouse, etc.
7. The “weight checks” have been overwhelmingly popular. As a result, they have added a sign in sheet that requests the baby’s date of birth so they can track child’s age and number of visits. Eventually they could possibly use an intern to “check in” with moms as they weigh.

**Wish List:**

- More time to work with moms face-to-face.
- Appointments sometimes need to be scheduled a week out (could/should be sooner).
- More time is needed to chart and do paperwork.
- It would be nice to have a Lactation Educator to assist with weight checks, phone calls, etc.